



## SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2020

### **From our Chair**

I hope this newsletter finds you and your communities well, feeling sure we have all experienced this enforced time of 'lock down' in different ways. However, I am certain that this period has brought with it both blessings and challenges for us all but hopefully we will have learnt much during these extraordinary times and will be able to grow and change as a result.

I have appreciated the extra space this time has afforded and the beauty of our monastic setting here at Mucknell Abbey, whilst also being mindful that many families will have lived this time in the confines of limited accommodation, without a garden. It has certainly been a time for focusing my prayer on these families and many others world-wide, plus the many who have lost loved ones to the virus and are struggling now both emotionally and financially as a result. This and so much more to continue holding in our hearts and prayer.

As I write I am aware that a few weeks ago we celebrated the wondrous feast of Pentecost, where we recalled the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all humankind. May our prayer be for a fresh outpouring of this same spirit to come upon us all, to refresh, strengthen and uphold us as we continue in our vocation as Christ's ambassadors in the world to-day.

Although writing in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spain amidst great unrest and uncertainty, St Teresa of Avila's words are, I believe, relevant for the times we are living through now.

She writes.....

Let nothing disturb you,

Let nothing frighten you

All things pass away,

God never changes.

Patience obtains all things,

He who has God

Finds he lacks nothing.

God alone suffices.

Great blessings,

Sr Sally OSB

### **Parish ministry in a time of coronavirus**

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted every aspect of life. For parish churches such as ours, who have 'cure of souls' of all those who live within the parish boundaries (extending far beyond our regular worshipping congregation) it has posed questions over what ministry looks like in this new and strange season.

There have been some painful consequences. Not being able to visit the lonely and frail at home and in care homes can feel at times like an abandonment of those who most appreciate physical presence and contact. Pastoral conversations held across a driveway feel somewhat hopeless when a hand upon the shoulder or a hug is what you know the individual needs. Even our inability to sit down over a cup of tea comes with a pang of grief.

By the grace of God, however, there have also been wonderful moments of hope and healing. Telephone conversations and praying down the phone line have become windows of hope. Offerings left on doorsteps have been received as treasured gifts, while letters posted have been read with great delight. Worshipping together 'virtually', as our church family has been trying to do, does not come close to gathering together in person but, somehow, by

God's Spirit, it does bring us together.

None of us would have chosen this pandemic, nor the consequences it has brought to parish ministry. But we can look to see the light in the darkness, to bring hope to the hopeless, and more than anything, to remain faithful in prayer.

This too shall pass.

*James Dwyer is Assistant Curate at St Andrew's Church, North Oxford.*

### **THE REVEREND MOTHER AT TYMAWR CONVENT, SR KATHERINE REFLECTED ON THE 'LOCK DOWN, IN HER APRIL LETTER**

However, I am minded that the very word that indicates this separateness – **apart** – contains within it a deep sense of belonging, as we are '**a part**' of the Body of Christ. As you are aware the Convent has been closed since January because of the necessary upgrading of the kitchen. In the middle of that process we heard that we also have to upgrade a lot of the fire protection throughout the house. And then Covid-19 demanded that we close the circle even more tightly so as to play our small but responsible part in not spreading the virus unnecessarily. We have been served in this by faithful friends who have shopped and delivered. Sr. Rosalind Mary is still down in Cornwall on her sabbatical. And each one of you whether at the coal face like Oblate Tony or at home living the remainder of this Holy Season alone have been playing your part. For we are one body – literally in terms of our createdness and spiritually in terms of our vocation as children of God and members of the Body of Christ.

You are all very present to us. On the occasion of Sr Janet Ann's Profession of Solemn Vows we made a tree of origami 'peace cranes' to decorate the refectory and to bring into one image the Cross and the peace and reconciliation brought to our hearts by Jesus through the gift of his life. We saved the cranes and Novice Joanna inscribed on the wings all the names of all of the members of SSC (one way of becoming familiar with all of you). They were then placed in a basket at the foot of the altar at the ceremony of my installation as Reverend Mother last May, so as to include each and every one of you. Throughout these last days, and so long as we are all separated, this

same basket sits once more at the foot of the altar. You are here, present in our hearts and prayers.

*Michelle Eyre, an oblate of St Mary's Convent, Wantage, writes:*

I'd love to share a little about the work of Discovering Prayer with you. Founded in 2014, we seek to harness the power of technology to share the riches of the Anglican religious life with a new generation. Through 150+ guided audio prayer times, courses and retreats, we help people deepen their relationship with God through prayer.

Our newly-launched Discovering Prayer Community has attracted almost 500 members already. They are now regularly saying daily office thanks to the morning, noon and evening prayer times we have made available. We are so grateful for the generous support of the Community of St Mary the Virgin, Community of St John Baptist Pershore, Nashdom, Pershore and Elmore Trust and Malling Abbey who have helped make this possible.

It's a joy to report that over 45,000 people have so far prayed with us. These ever-growing numbers and the warmth of feedback we receive shows that Discovering Prayer is, by God's grace, helping people across the UK and beyond to find new richness in their relationship with God.

To learn more or explore ways we could collaborate, please do contact me at [michelle@discoveringprayer.com](mailto:michelle@discoveringprayer.com) or on 07980 881652.

[www.discoveringprayer.com](http://www.discoveringprayer.com)

## **COMMUNITY NEWS**

WE offer prayers and congratulations to Sr Mary Julian on her election as Reverend Mother at CHC

Best wishes also to Sr. Gregory on entering the Noviciate at Mucknell Abbey